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# The Name is the Thing

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# The Name is the Thing

## **Abstract**

During the 1996 annual meeting of the American Folklore Society (AFS), several folklorists called for the replacement of the term *folklore* with one that would better represent current activities in the field and that would be free of any negative connotations. A new term would enable folklorists to center themselves in both scholarship and public affairs. In defense of *folklore*, the present article begins by comparing the addresses given at the celebration of the term's centennial and those delivered at its 150th anniversary. In the United States, where folklore has suffered the greatest damage, there is a correlation between the departure of folklorists from the academy and their move into the public sector and the devaluation of the meaning of folklore.

## **Disciplines**

Cultural History | Folklore | Linguistics | Near and Middle Eastern Studies

## The Name Is the Thing

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### *The Centennial: The Science of Folklore*

FIFTY YEARS AGO, as the world woke up from the nightmare of the Second World War, folklorists in England and the United States commemorated the centennial of *folk-lore*. In their respective presidential addresses to the British Folklore Society and the AFS, Lord Raglan and Melville Herskovits each surveyed the territories of the same discipline and found them as different as could be. For Raglan folklore was in a state of depletion. The study of superstitions, the mainstay of Thoms's definition of folklore, was "gloomy and barren," or simply not attractive. The subject matter of folklore was "tending toward exhaustion," and comparative studies had lost their luster since any new discovery only repeated what was already known (Raglan 1946:98).

Raglan offered a three-pronged solution to rescue folklore from its doldrums. First, he proposed to make folklore into "a historical science" that would study the evolution of customs and costumes. Second, he suggested "dialect [as] another subject which has received little scientific study" (1946:102) and implicitly could and should be an object of folklore research. Finally, he turned to vernacular architecture, "local house types," as a subject of folkloric scientific inquiry. In concluding his address, Raglan did not "suggest that the members of the Society should abandon their quest for superstitions and quaint survivals. These must remain one of the subjects of their study" (1946:105). But as a way of strengthening the

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scientific aspect of folklore, he proposed “to collect and publish in convenient form, information on all aspects of folk life, using the term in its widest sense, in the hope of enabling us to find out how and why changes in customs and fashions come about, and thereby developing a real science of folklore” (1946:105).

In hindsight, this was a disappointing research program. From the scholar who had offered us, ten years earlier, the classic study of *The Hero* (1936), in which he formulated an analytical model for the heroic personality in tradition, we could have expected a more innovative and rigorous agenda, but Raglan couched his argument in personal anecdotes and grounded it in the local landscape of the English countryside. His science of folklore was British through and through. The researchers were city and country gentlemen and their objects were communities of miners and farmers. The Trobriand Islanders, the Nagas of Assam, and the Ashanti were the symbolic distant other, about whom, paradoxically, more information was available than “about our own fellow-countrymen” (1946:100). His approach to the science he espoused was, at best, amateurish. He found research topics “interesting” (1946:101, 102) without formulating a theory, a hypothesis, or a broader frame of knowledge that would offer a reason for his interest.

Furthermore, the directions for the rejuvenation of the science of folklore might have been new to Raglan, but hardly to anybody else. No doubt, there has been immense progress in his three targeted areas since 1946, but by that time substantial research on these subjects had already been made. The historical study of everyday life had been fermenting in France at least since the establishment of the *Annales d'Histoire Economique et Sociale* (1929) by Marc Bloch (1886–1944) and Lucien Febvre (1878–1956).<sup>1</sup> As a systematic field of study, dialectology dates to the mid-19th century (Chambers and Trudgill 1980; Francis 1983). In fact, Raglan's selection of dialect as a new challenge for folklore research is somewhat baffling, since the first book that has the word *folklore* in its title also has the term *dialect* in the title (Sternberg 1851). Finally, the study of vernacular architecture flourished in continental Europe and England during the interwar years (Fox 1943[1931]; Peate 1940). However, Raglan, not an academic, did not bear the responsibility of acknowledging previous scholarship when advancing new ideas.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast, across the Atlantic, Melville Herskovits surveyed the fields of folklore from an academic perspective that had been shaped by his anthropological education and research experience in Africa and the Americas. Quoting Stith Thompson (1940:866), he first noticed the worldwide acceptance of the term in European languages, then pointed out that this linguistic diffusion did not imply conceptual uniformity. “In Germany, *Volkskunde* has from the beginning been treated as a subject of far wider scope than the folklore of England. . . . In the Latin countries, both of Europe and the New World, the concept of the scope of folklore varies between the limits set by the English and the German views” (Herskovits 1946:92, emphasis in original). In France, he further remarked, van Gennep had not considered folklore “a simple collection of trivial unrelated facts, which are more or less curious and amusing, but a synthetic science that is concerned in particular with rural life and peasants and those of them who live in industrial and urban surroundings” (Herskovits 1946:92–93).<sup>3</sup> Throughout his

address Herskovits juggled the American, the German, the French, and the English views in order to achieve his desired redefinition of “folklore” as the study of oral literature.

Though it was problematic, encumbered by conflicting approaches and contradictory theories and methods, for both Raglan and Herskovits folklore was a science writ large. Raglan projected folklore as a historical science of everyday life that was concerned with behavior, speech, dress, and housing. His words rang fresh within the context of English folklore. By comparison, Herskovits’s science of folklore was in the anthropological tradition that Franz Boas had initiated in the United States (Bronner 1986; Stocking 1996) and that William Wells Newell articulated in his programmatic essay (*JAF* 1888) and other writings (Newell 1898). Herskovits concluded that in spite of the ambiguities of the term and the dilemmas folklorists faced, “Folklorists . . . have succeeded over the century just ending, in welding our discipline firmly into the structure of scientific scholarship” (1946:94). For him, “what we call folklore . . . which to many seems trivial, to many seems dull . . . may become the most attractive and serious of sciences” (1946:94). While Herskovits reached out for textual support for his ideas all the way across the Atlantic, quoting Andrew Lang from A. R. Wright (1931:11), it was clear that he had in mind the particular American configuration of folklore that Newell delineated around the same time that Andrew Lang did.

No doubt, 50 years ago, the perception that folklore was welded “firmly into the structure of scientific scholarship” was somewhat premature. With no departments to speak of, no research institutes, and no training programs, individuals rather than universities bore the burden of folklore. Their accomplishments and future plans were then and now a source of pride and inspiration. In their studies they spanned the gamut of cultures from regional Americana to German, Spanish, African, and other immigrant lores, to the folklore of the American Indians in the East, the Plains and the West (*JAF* 1946; Gayton 1947).

The absence of nationalism as a component of folklore was unique to the American configuration of folklore. Nationalism was crucial in the transformation of the German *Volkskunde* from avocation to science (Riehl 1859), and functioned to catalyze folklore scholarship in smaller European nations (Alver 1989; Basgöz 1972; Dow 1991; Gillis 1994; Herzfeld 1982; Hutchinson 1987; Kapferer 1988; Snyder 1959; Wilson 1976), but regional diversity and multiple ethnicity have left no space for the popular nationalistic spirit. It did not figure in the American folklore paradigm that William Wells Newell constructed (Abrahams 1988; Bell 1973, n.d.) and on the basis of which Herskovits formulated his redefinition of folklore.

Similarly absent from Herskovits’s thesis is the “affable condescension to the ‘common people’ ” that Wright (1931:9) discerns in Henry Bourne’s *Antiquities Vulgares* (1725), and traces of which are still apparent in Lord Raglan’s commemorative address. Such a sentiment is inherent in the attitude of antiquarians who collected popular objects (Elsner and Cardinal 1994; P. Levine 1986; Pomian 1987; Stagl 1995), but, as Herskovits points out, “in the American [academic] scene, the problem posed by the antiquarian point of view in folklore was . . . peripheral”

(Herskovits 1946:94).<sup>4</sup> Rather, he sets out to show that in America “the presence of Indians . . . [had a role] in shaping the conceptualization of our discipline, even for American folklorists whose primary concerns were far removed from anthropological studies” (1946:94).

By reaching out to the formative era of folklore in America, Herskovits evokes intellectual roots that stretch even further into European intellectual history. Implicit in his redefinition of folklore as oral literature is not only a restatement of an anthropological division of labor in nonliterate societies (Bascom 1953; Zumwalt 1988) but also the adoption of a humanistic perspective that seeks to embrace literate and nonliterate peoples on equal terms. Six years after Herskovits’s statement, the Italian folklorist Giuseppe Cocchiara (1981[1952]:13–28) exposed the roots folklore had in Renaissance humanism, and the role it played in shaping the human sciences in the 19th and 20th centuries. In the 1940s, unbeknown to Western scholars, Mikhail Bakhtin considered the writings of Rabelais as the earliest indications of folkloristic consciousness (Bakhtin 1968:4).<sup>5</sup> But none could have stated the position of folklore in the human sciences more clearly than Cocchiara’s 18th-century countryman, Giambattista Vico (1688–1744), who wrote, employing the term *mythology*,

The first science to be learned should be mythology or the interpretation of fables; for, as we shall see, all the histories of the gentiles have their beginnings in fables, which were the first histories of the gentile nations. By such a method the beginning of sciences as well as of the nations are to be discovered, for they sprang from the nations and from no other sources. [1984(1948):51]<sup>6</sup>

### *Fifty Years Later: Lamentations for Folklore*

In her 1996 AFS presidential address, Jane Beck, taking a cue from a lawyer who said to Shalom Staub, “You need a new word for yourselves,” makes the diagnosis that “the term *folklore* helps to marginalize the discipline.” Therefore she suggests that we “consider the possibility [of changing the name of our field] seriously. We should have,” she argues, “a term for the discipline so that people will recognize it as the profound study that it is. We have much to offer other fields; why not change the name and at the same time do a little redefining?” (Beck 1997:134). Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett identifies “folklore” as a liability, proposing to “change our name to enhance our survival” (1996:252). Following the principle of “truth in advertising,” she argues that “it is time to assess where we find ourselves, those trained as folklorists and those who identify themselves as folklorists, and ask what name best describes what we do” (1996:252).

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has a far more drastic agenda than just changing the name *folklore*. She well understands that a name change is not a minor verbal cosmetic operation, but that it signals the death of a discipline. She regards herself a passive witness to that historical process and thinks that what is left for her is to give folklore a proper burial. Invoking a biological model, she says,

Disciplines are not forever. . . . We are the beneficiaries of the fragmentation of the great omnibus disciplines of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—cosmography, geography, statistics, and philology. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, as these fields broke up into their sub-specialties, they either disappeared or became a shadow of their former selves. [1996:249]

Similar metaphors dominate the article of Regina Bendix, who advocates “a Frazerian ritual slaying of the name *folklore* to make room for the installation of one or more new names” (this issue:238, emphasis in original). Both marketing and ideological considerations motivate her aggressive attitude toward *folklore*. She argues that “the name *folklore* impinges on the field’s efficacy” (this issue:236, emphasis in original), constraining it in “the marketplace of ideas” in which folklorists have broadened the scope of their research, “from remote villages to what Marc Augé calls the ‘non-places’ of supermodernity” (Augé 1995; Bendix this issue:236). In “the *marketplace of professionals*, the name literally stands in the way of getting jobs” (this issue:236). In the ideological arena, she considers folklore contaminated by its use by national and racial movements and hence assumes “that the ideology inscribed in the field of folklore has during the past century and a half flatly or even overtly assisted in a horrifying number of deaths,” (this issue:238) and therefore, guilty by association, it should be eliminated.

In the first centennial of folklore, leading scholars charted its future with new visions, directions, and challenges. How then, in less than half a century could folklore fall? How then, in less than a quarter of a century, could folklore shift from the interdisciplinary highway of ideas into a dead-end alley? How did the “New Perspectives” (Paredes and Bauman 1972) dull into no prospect at all? How could folklore sink so low in the eyes of its practitioners that a retiring president, a former president, and a board member of the AFS could respectively declare *folklore* an undesirable term that should be dumped from our professional discourse, removed from the name of our society, and eliminated altogether as a symbol of our professional identity?

To be sure, the messages of Beck, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, and Bendix are not the first signals of trouble in the house of folklore, nor have these three distinguished folklorists been the only messengers. Frustrations have encroached upon folklore and folklorists from every corner. Negative connotations of the term in popular use; ambiguities of professional identity; economic instability; apparent academic disrespect on the one hand and pilferage of folklore subjects, concepts, and theories by other disciplines on the other hand, all have amounted to a real threat to folklore’s scholarly integrity. When a group of folklorists met in Santa Rosa at the annual meeting of the California Folklore Society on April 27–29, 1990, they bemoaned and deliberated upon these very issues, and when the meeting ended, Robert Georges concluded it, motivational style, with a call to arms: “And I want to see how many people say, ‘I’m a folklorist!’ Raise your hands! How many people are proud of it? Raise your hand! How many of you think we should continue the good fight? Raise your hands! Good. Thank you very much for coming and participating” (Georges 1991:126).

Turning the culture of folklorists into the culture of organization (Jones et al. 1988) could be as ominous as spreading despair. It is the losing team that needs its cheerleaders most. Both the message of doom and the rallying shouts signal a condition of folklore that stands in sharp contrast to the views folklorists expressed just 50 years ago. At that time, Lord Raglan's criticism of folklore studies was severe but not destructive; Herskovits's redefinition of folklore as oral literature aimed at strengthening its intellectual and academic position.

Hence we must ask ourselves, what road has folklore traversed in the past half-century that its own custodians call for its execution? Why does folklore seem to sink to such low depths that its own rescue mission turns into a funerary chorus? And why are the praise songs of 50 years ago lamentations? Some answers, I suspect, recalling a line from the era of *When We Were Good* (Cantwell 1996) are "blowing in the wind," others, however, are in our deeds.

### *Folklore in the Academy: Entrance and Exit*

First it is necessary, as Beck (1997) proposed, to take stock of our discipline. How different is its position in the universities now than 50 or even 100 years ago? When and where has its wheel of fortune made its downward turn, if indeed it has made such a turn, and what are the reasons for the decline in aspiration and collective self-confidence? Even without engaging in a sophisticated statistical analysis it is clear that folklore is not thriving in an academic environment in the United States. It never was. There has never been a "golden age of folklore," McNeil (1980:943) notwithstanding. Although the AFS was admitted into the American Council of Learned Societies in 1945, the universities virtually barred folklore from their structure.<sup>7</sup> No celebratory rhetorics, or even enumeration of courses and departments (Baker 1971, 1986; Boggs 1940, 1945; Camp 1989; Clements 1988; Dorson 1950, 1961, 1965, 1972a, 1972b:3–10; Hand 1960) can camouflage the fact that numerically folklore has but a pitiful presence in U.S. higher education. By any quantitative measure we apply—number of departments, number of students, financial support for research, publications—only delusionary grandeur may create a *fata morgana* of self-importance. During the period of institutional growth in the 1950s and 1960s, and the continuous trickle up to the present, departments of folklore have been established in less than one tenth of one percent of U.S. colleges and universities.<sup>8</sup>

This regrettable situation stands in contrast to the original intention of the founders of the AFS. They were motivated by a commitment to scholarship. Among them were distinguished members of distinguished universities, or young and visionary scholars whose later accomplishments reflected their early ideals and goals. Their first meeting took place at University Hall at Harvard University (JAF 1888:3; McNeil 1980:781), a gesture that had, no doubt, practical reasons, but also symbolic implications. Their journal was to publish only those articles that "seem to possess sufficient scientific status" (JAF 1888:7) and exclude popular and philosophically speculative essays. But the scientific model they envisioned lacked bases in the scientific establishments. Many of the founders had faculty



positions but not in folklore departments, which did not exist at the time. This pattern of relations between the Society and the universities continued for over 60 years. Researchers highly regarded for their work on folklore in their respective disciplines did not find it necessary or desirable to have folklore as a distinct discipline.

The establishment of the Folklore Institute and the doctoral degree program in 1949 and the Department of Folklore in 1963 at Indiana University and the Folklore Program at the University of Pennsylvania in 1962 (Samuelson 1983) represented a new era for folklore in the United States. A formal educational program that would constitute folklore as an independent discipline required a framework, delineated boundaries, constructed an intellectual pedigree, and defined fundamental theoretical concepts. All these factors bestowed upon folklore a distinct professional identity. But that change from an elusive existence to a clear presence has proven both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, the faculty members appropriated portions out of existing fields such as anthropology, literature, history, linguistics, and ethnomusicology, and recombined them into the paradigm of folklore. On the other hand, with no sufficient number of departments in which to place graduating folklorists there was no way to carry this newly lit torch. While folklore has achieved recognition within the academy, with only a few departments in the entire country it has remained a discipline in isolation.

In order to overcome this paradoxical turn of events, Dorson searched for a strategy for folklore, fully aware of the dynamics of university recruitment:

The crux of the matter lies in the departmental structure of American universities. Departments are composed of scholars holding the Ph.D. in a common field, and they recruit new members with the same doctorate. In smaller institutions, the president may hire new members, but he places them in a department of their fellow-Ph.D.s. The problem for the new doctor of folklore, and his sponsors, is to persuade a department composed of doctors in English, or anthropology, or history, or foreign languages, or music, to give him a home. A number of such departments have taken in their token folklorists, but each negotiation represents a struggle; many institutions possess no folklorists, and too often, especially now, if the folklorist moves to a more attractive situation his vacancy is gobbled up by hungry chairmen, former colleagues, or harassed deans to use for a Milton specialist or an urban anthropologist, or it may simply vanish. [1972a:107]

Under such circumstances, the placement of a newly minted folklore doctorate in a university faculty became a familiar struggle. When the postwar growth in U.S. higher education came to a standstill, the folklore graduate pressure at the gates of the academy came to naught. The new doctorates in folklore joined the academic proletariat that rose in numbers in other fields as well, and became part of a national intellectual unemployment line consisting of thousands of personal frustration stories.<sup>9</sup>

The success in getting the proverbial foot in the academic door turned disastrous when this very door was quick to shut firm again. The growth that took place in the 1960s and early 1970s oversupplied the demand that theoretically it should have opened up. Yet facing such an economic dilemma, no one even contemplated scaling down the development of folklore. All the speakers in the panel

entitled "The Academic Future of Folklore" (Dorson 1972a) save one endorsed Dorson's position, emphasizing different aspects of his strategy for expansion, depending on personal experience and orientation. The only uncomfortably dissenting voice was that of Robert Byington (Dorson 1972a:113–114), who, continuing a dialogue he had initiated a year earlier (Sweterlitsch 1971), pointed the way toward the exit sign from the university and onward to applied folklore. At that time Byington's agenda for the future of folklore was still somewhat vague, but the program for an opportunistic defection from the university clearly emerged in the conclusion of his statement:

What I am saying is that whether [the folklorist] teaches one course, directs a program, chairs a department, or works for church or state, the trained folklorist, *qua* folklorist, is going to find more and more work; he need merely look around for it. And if this sounds like an endorsement of Applied Folklore, I mean it to. I see "pure" and "applied" on a *single* continuum, not as disparate or antithetical activities. If I appear to emphasize the latter in these concluding comments, it is only because I agree with what Dick Dorson almost but not quite said, viz., that, whether we like it or not, higher education is entering an era of unprecedented accountability to the public at large—meaning, among other things, that those disciplines with demonstrable social value are likely to fare better than those without it. Folklore has a great opportunity here. Let's not blow it. [quoted in Dorson 1972a:114, emphasis in original]

In spite of the strong support for Dorson's academic strategy for folklore, the lone dissenting voice on that panel won the day. There is a direct continuous line of action from the 1971 Middle Atlantic Conference on Folk Culture, held at Point Park College in Pittsburgh and devoted to the theme of "Applied Folklore," to the formation of an AFS committee on "Applied Folklore," to the "Proposal for the Establishment of a Center for Applied Folklore," to the lobbying effort that culminated in the successful legislation of the 1976 American Folklife Preservation Act.<sup>10</sup> Burt Feintuch and the participants in the 1985 conference "Folklife and the Public Sector: Assessment and Prognosis" (Feintuch 1988) concur in this historical interpretation. I defer to another occasion a discussion of Byington's claim that "'pure' and 'applied' [folklore are] on a single continuum" (Dorson 1972a:114) and whether the dichotomies between the two are indeed mistaken (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1988).

At this point it is sufficient to note that the AFS has made a deliberate choice: rather than rising to the challenge that folklore has encountered in the universities, establishing itself as the indispensable discipline that it is, it has sought an alternative model for development outside the academic structure. Serious scholars have assumed that since the academic route is closed it might be possible to open up a new course of action. They found a precedent for such an action during the period of the Great Depression, when the federal government included folklore among the projects designed for the employment of writers, teachers, and local historians (Botkin 1939; Hirsch 1987, 1988, 1996; Mangione 1972:265–285; Penkower 1977:136–158). This massive collecting project was not initiated by the AFS nor did it have a rigorous methodological design, but by its conclusion the academic and nonacademic members of the Society appreciated its significance

and listened without critical comments to Botkin's description of his publication plans for this material (*JAF* 1946:520–522). With the progress of folklore in the universities stalled, the turn toward “Public Folklore” as “Applied Folklore” was later rechristened in the early 1970s (Baron and Spitzer 1992; Feintuch 1988; Gross Bressler 1995), received not only a passive blessing but also the active involvement of the members and office holders of the AFS.

In the opinion of folklorists who followed that route, being a conscious and conscientious public folklorist depends less upon employment venue than the primacy of collaboration with traditional artists and communities in the representation of their cultural expression. Public folklorists do many or all of the following over the arc of a career: research and writing to describe and interpret folk cultures; teaching students to know, respect, and further research diverse cultural expression; producing media documents and curating exhibits and festivals that present traditional communities and the issues they face; addressing public policy and market conditions that affect access to tangible and intangible resources necessary for sustenance of traditional culture; and working with native scholars to assist groups in documenting their own cultures. [Baron and Spitzer 1992:2]

While “Public Folklore” indeed has expanded the employment opportunities for the professional folklorists who have made it their choice, there has been one thing that they have encountered in the public arena for which they have not bargained: *folklore* in scholarship and *folklore* in the community have divergent meanings.

As a discipline, folklore has not incurred negative evaluations. Its difficulty in making headway within the academic structure may have to do with its nonscholarly tradition, but not because it “suggests falsity, wrongness, fantasy and distortion” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1996:246). Archer Taylor has observed that

In the humanities folklore has won for itself only a small place. This is not surprising because it has not been able to free itself completely from the antiquarian and dilettante tradition of collecting curiosities. Proverbs, tales, ballads, customs, or superstitions are thought to be quaint and are recorded and studied for that reason. [1952:59]

If, then, folklore is tainted it is necessary to distinguish between its various hues. During the “Mid-century International Folklore Conference” that was held at Bloomington, Indiana in 1953, the negative connotation of the term *folklore* was not an issue (Thompson 1953:248–265; 318–323); neither was it a concern in the flurry of folklore definitions that burst out in the 1950s and early 1960s (Bascom 1953, 1955; Bayard 1953; Halpert 1958; Utley 1961).

The first inkling of any negative connotation associated with *folklore* in a scholarly context appeared in “The Ditchley Park Conference Resolution.” In their address to the nonacademic public, the participants acknowledged that “folklore is often regarded as a matter of fun and frivolity” (Dorson et al. 1970:95). At that time Dorson had not yet recovered, if he ever did, from the cutting of one million dollars from the National Defense Education Act that was targeted, among other fields, for folklore. While in his original letter he cited the journalistic ridicule of folklore, he associated the word mainly with folk singers and his pat archenemies, the “fakelorists.” “Unhappily,” he writes, “the study of folklore in the United

States has become contaminated by amateurs, entertainers, and charlatans. Because the word 'folklore' is used so widely, all kinds of people pass judgment on folklore . . ." (Dorson 1962:163). He maintained this association in writing "The Ditchley Park Conference Resolution." Apparently neither he nor the other conferees who made the association between folklore and entertainment appeared troubled by the negative connotation of inherent falsehood. The absence of negative semantics from "folklore" was not due simply to the scholarly context and to folklorists' positive attitudes toward it. In fact, more general indicators suggest that folklore acquired its negative connotation in the English language relatively recently.

The standard meanings of *folklore* in the Oxford English Dictionary (2nd edition) include "a. The traditional beliefs, legends, and customs, current among the common people; the study of these." What might be construed as a negative semantic value is added as "b. Recently in extended use: popular fantasy and belief." The illustrating phrases date from 1954. The American standard dictionaries suggest an even later date of attaching any negative meanings to *folklore*. Only the third edition of the authoritative *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language* includes as a third definition the description of folklore as "a widely held unsupported specious notion or body of notions." This phrase is absent from the second edition of the same dictionary. The more popular versions of the dictionary, such as *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, represent similar developments. The seventh edition does not include any negative connotation for folklore, and only in the ninth and tenth editions (published in 1977 and 1994 respectively) is there a listing for the third meaning: "3: a widely held unsupported notion or body of notions," and "3: an often unsupported notion, story, or saying that is widely circulated."<sup>11</sup>

Admittedly, by their very nature dictionaries lag behind any semantic development of language in society, and therefore it would be erroneous to assume that "folklore" acquired its negative value in English and American uses only at the second half of the 20th century. Earlier dates are probable. Dorson stated as matter of course in 1972 that "to the layman, and to the academic man too, folklore suggests falsity, wrongness, fantasy, and distortion" (1972c:1). Regardless of the precise year, however, it is clear that implicating "folklore" with any negative association is a secondary and a relatively recent phenomena. But this has been the meaning and the range of association encountered by folklorists who work in the public sector. In academic contexts this negative connotation has been known, but there it has been counterbalanced by all the positive analytical associations of the term.

In analytical discourse terms have a life of their own. *Folklore* has been defined and redefined many times over. Each country and each generation has molded the concept to suit its own intellectual concerns. Scholarly dialogues provide sufficient room for disagreements, nuances, and shifts in meanings, emphases, and purposes within a continuous discourse. The *folklore* of "New Perspectives" (Paredes and Bauman 1972) is not identical with the *folklore* of "Theorizing Folklore" (Briggs

and Shuman 1993), yet the identity of the term provides conceptual continuity that makes any difference meaningful.

In scholarship, the meaning of *folklore* is subject to negotiation, but in the community at large politicians and the public seek a definite unambiguous answer to the question, “What is *folklore*?” Once folklorists step into the public arena they fall into the trap of intellectual closure, and by doing so terminate their own inquiry.

The semantic shifts of *folklore* that dictionaries document represent an extension of meanings from the particular to the general. As tall tales, legends, folktales, superstitions, and ballads represent lies, fiction, fantasy, and irrationality, so does the general category to which they belong. When *folklore* extends its social base and becomes a widely circulated term, it broadens its meaning to include connotations that might be in conflict with its learned sense. Jane Beck is a folklore scholar and a proud public folklorist; Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett is academically based but has formulated the theoretical foundation for the public excursion of folklore (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1988). If Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1996) is correct in her description of *folklore*, the meaning of the term outside scholarly discourse is in itself a survival of 19th-century theories of culture and folklore, a learned idea that has become a *gesunkenes Kulturgut* in the public domain. There it preserves meanings that scholars held previously but no longer hold. Yet despite her awareness that “the notion of folklore as error” is an error in itself and only part of “popular understanding” (1996:252), she is ready to give up her hard-gained insights for an idea that she knows is wrong. She no doubt knows that folklore has not been “the science of tradition” she claims it to be (1996:252), at least not for the last 50 years, ever since Herskovits pointed out that “the nonsense tales about psychiatrists that go the rounds of University faculty clubs are ‘lore’ and the intellectuals who tell them are a ‘folk’ ” (Herskovits 1946:100), and she knows that the concepts of “folk” and “tradition” have been critically examined over and over (Ben-Amos 1984; Dundes 1977; Glassie 1995; Handler and Linnekin 1984; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; McDonald 1997; Shils 1981; Simpson 1921); in folkloristics (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1988) these concepts hardly have the same meanings she imputes to them, drawing upon notions prevailing in the general public.

Even some publications for lay readership have taken notice of these conceptual changes. For example, *Merriam Webster’s Encyclopedia of Literature* clearly states,

After World War II the study of folklore lost its restrictions of class and even of educational level; any group that expressed its inner cohesion by maintaining shared traditions qualified as a “folk,” whether the linking factor was occupation, language, place of residence, age, religion, or ethnic origin. Emphasis also shifted from the past to the present, from the search of origins to the investigation of present meaning and function. [1995:424]

The entry, by the way, does not include a single negative word about folklore, neither as a discipline nor as a subject matter.<sup>12</sup> Nowadays it is the professional folklorists who lag behind their own image.

The excursion into public folklore has brought on a mental fatigue that brings to the surface personal and professional doubts: "Maybe in fighting to keep the name, we'll lose our life as a field of study. Shall we uphold the name, defend what we do in terms of it, and correct misconceptions of what folklore is and what folklorists do?" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1996:252). Within the discipline there could not have been any other reply than a resounding positive affirmation. The negative reply that Beck, Bendix, and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett so loudly voice is a direct consequence of their exchanging scholarly for popular presentations of folklore. They have adopted the perception of the field as it exists in popular culture and they understandably do not like it, but instead of changing their orientation they opt to shift the terminological framework of their ideas to suit their new context of operation.

Within the public arena, folklore festivals have replaced the country shows that exhibited freaks of nature. Now the festivals put on display the oddities of modern societies, the storyteller, the craftsperson, and the musician. Such festivals and public presentations do indeed marginalize folklore, making it a quaint curiosity. The association of such public displays with scholarship, now that trained scholars put them on, makes folklore appear like a freak discipline itself. From this perspective folklore is the domain of survivals and marginal characters. But this is a distorted view of folklore as a discipline. When folklorists are engaged in such activities they begin to accept their image as reflected in curved mirrors. They do not like what they see. Who would? But instead of getting out of the field of warped reflections they think that a change in name would change the way they look (see Lapierre 1995).

### *What Is in a Name?*

The semantic changes that *folklore* has experienced in general use have clearly affected folklorists who have entered the public arena, and even those who limit their discourse to analytical modes are aware of them. No doubt, there is a certain degree of mutual semantic interference emanating from the different contexts in which *folklore* occurs. Possibly, the contradictory uses of *folklore* as an aggregate of false and irrational notions, and *folklore* as a discipline governed by logic and systematic theories and methods, make the maintenance of such a distinction even more difficult. Yet the naming of a science has an important function in the history of thought and it should not be discarded because of some external linguistic developments. The consideration of the negative meanings of *folklore* not as new philological developments but as "atavism, a return of the repressed, a deep layer in an archeology of our knowledge" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1996:246) turns *folklore* itself into a survival, ignoring the diachronic dynamics of language and equating *folklore* with its Latin root, *vulgus*, that appears in Thomas Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica: Enquiries into Vulgar and Common Errors* (1646), one of the books that the canonical history of the field regards as a precursor of folklore research (Dorson 1968:23).

The name of the discipline is like a site in the archaeology of knowledge, formulating a science into a layered progression of ideas that are interrelated in either positive or negative ways. A name frames evolutionary as well as revolutionary cycles within a discipline, providing it with an identity and a reference (Kuhn 1962). Pre-Newtonian and post-Newtonian physics differ radically from each other, but they are physics just the same. Any new theory, idea, or definition would be meaningless, unless it were conceived in relation to previous thought in the same discipline. The interdisciplinary forays in which folklorists have always engaged have changed directions and fields in different historical periods and different countries, yet even these deliberate digressions from the core concerns of folklore become significant only when they stand in relation to an identified discipline. Then they can expand its scope or narrow its focus, shift courses of inquiry, and turn folklore theories upside down, but all these creative thoughts will have cognitive structure provided by the name of the discipline.

There are no free names in a language. Each word, even if it is a neologism as *folk-lore* was 150 years ago, comes with its semantic load. Searching for a new term of identity, we would be like orphans scrounging to adopt new parents, only to find out that they have their own troublesome genealogies and complex family relationships that we would have no choice but to inherit. In order to appreciate Thoms's new term it is necessary not only to relate it to the concept he tried to replace, as Dorson did (1968:1–43), but also to examine the connotations that *folk* and *lore* had in the English of 1846.

As Schulze (1949) documents them, both terms were in use in archaic and poetic language. *Folk* as a synonym for *people* occurs quite often in Chaucer's poetry (Oizumi and Miki 1991). As a term that was available to Thoms, Schulze suggests it did not yet have, or no longer had, any association with its Latin root *vulgus* (1949:11). *Lore* was clearly a term taken out of the Romantic vocabulary of the 18th century, particularly that of the Scottish poets who sought to revive their vernacular writings. Its earliest use is from the 17th century in Samuel Butler's (1612–1680) satiric poem "Hudibras": "Learned he was in Med'c'nal Lore" (Butler 1967:35), but during the 18th and 19th centuries there was a noticeable increase in its use and in its range of applications. As used by different poets it meant "the learning of a people." James Beattie (1735–1803) writes in his poem "The Minstrel" (1771) about "the lore of Rome and Greece" (Gilfillan 1854:24), and William Falconer (1732–1769) invokes in his poem "The Shipwreck" (1762) those "unskilled in Grecian or in Roman lore" (Gilfillan 1854:241). In the 19th century, Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822) had the character of Mahmud in his play *Hellas* (1822) say to Ahasuerus, "Thou art an adept in the difficult lore of Greek and Frank philosophy" (Ingpen and Peck 1927:3, 42), and earlier, in 1817, he wished to "mould [the] growing spirit [of his son] in the flame of Grecian lore" (Ingpen and Peck 1927:3, 162). William Wordsworth (1770–1850) wrote in 1822 about the monks in the monastery of Old Bangor (Wales) who "by their prayers—guard the store of Aboriginal and Roman lore" (Knight 1885:7, 12).

In other verses the term pertains to specific forms of discourse. Within a theatrical context, John Cunningham (1729–1773) suggests to the listeners in his poem

"A Prologue, Spoken by Mr. Diggs, on opening the Edinburgh Theatre in 1763," "So the fair fields of fancy we'll explore, And search the gardens of dramatic lore" (Cunningham 1766:148). In his poem "To My Lyre," Henry Kirke White (1785–1806) writes that "no academic lore has taught [him] the solemn strain to pour" (*The Poetical Works* 1853:16), but in spite of its current resonance the term should not be interpreted anachronistically. In still other poems, lore acquires meanings that anticipate its usages in the post-Thomsian era, after the coinage of the term *folklore*. In a poetic dialogue between his character Lochiel and a wizard, Thomas Campbell (1777–1844) has the wizard say that "the sunset of life give[s] [him] mystical lore" (*The Poetical Works* 1853:36), and Falconer mentions in "The Shipwreck" "the tales of hapless love in ancient lore" (Gilfillan 1854:188), while White recalls "treasur'd tales and legendary lore" in his poem "Childhood" (*The Poetical Works* 1853:2). This particular phrase has enjoyed, evidently, some popularity, as Oliver Goldsmith (1728–1774) also wrote it into his poem "The Hermit: A Ballad" (1765). He considers the hermit "skill'd in legendary lore" (Goldsmith 1884:105). Poetic usage increasingly associated lore with concepts, forms, and roles that later became part of the conceptualization of folklore. Beattie writes in his poem "The Minstrel," "Whate'er of lore tradition could supply from Gothic tale, or song or fable old" (Gilfillan 1854:19), and Shelley says in "Laon and Cythna" (1771),

Yes, from the records of my youthful state,  
And from the lore of bards and sages old,  
Have I collected language to unfold  
Truth to my countrymen

[Ingpen and Peck 1927:1, 301]

In his poem "The Lady of the Lake" (1809–1810), Walter Scott (1771–1832) refers to "Tine-man forged by fairy lore" (Scott 1900:167). Other compounds, "ancient lore," "philosophic lore," "poetic lore," and "literarian lore," occur in the writings of these and other romantic poets (Schulze 1949:17–39).

In 1830, 16 years before Thoms's coinage, the June issue of the *Gentleman's Magazine* included an essay with the suggestion to use *lore* instead of the classical suffix *-ology*, for example, "earthlore" for geology, "starlore" for astrology, or "birdlore" for ornithology (Schulze 1949:10). It is impossible to determine whether Thoms was aware of, or remembered, this suggestion, but if he did, *folklore* would have meant for him not only the subject matter of the lore of the people, but also the study of the people, representing the same duality that has troubled folklorists ever since.

William Thoms, antiquarian that he was, did not articulate a theory or a method to accompany his neologism; it was only later generations that shaped and reshaped its conceptual content (Legros 1962). To a certain extent, the lack of a precise dogmatic definition that students often bemoan served the discipline well, as it enabled folklorists to mold the discipline anew, formulating syntheses of new ideas and maneuvering its directions among the other fields of scholarship.



In the course of time there have been communities of scholars that have used the name of *folklore* to support some of the most horrendous acts human beings have ever committed. The use of the idea of folklore as conceptualized in the German *Volkskunde* to support Nazi ideology (Bendix this issue; Dow and Lixfeld 1986, 1991, 1994; Kamenetsky 1972; Lixfeld 1994; Stein 1987) remains a blot on the history of folklore scholarship. But we cannot and should not whitewash it by changing our name. We should not revise our history nor change our name to suit our ideals. Nazi ideology is not “inscribed in the field of folklore” (Bendix this issue:238), nor is any other nationalistic ideology. The Nazis used the idea of folklore often by distorting facts to suit their purposes as they twisted and turned other ideas that have their roots in European Enlightenment and Romanticism, putting them into the service of their ideology and actions (see Olender 1992).

Nationalism is an attribute that is projected onto, or imagined in, but not inherent to folklore (Anderson 1991; Ben-Amos 1983). While it is possible to understand the motivation of our German colleagues to distance themselves from the term *Volkskunde*, abused in the Nazi regime, it is not the name but the actions scholars committed at that time that is abhorrent. By retaining the name *folklore* we would not be identifying with evil, but maintaining the memory of the potentially destructive power of our ideas while employing them constructively in our research.

### *Folklore among the Disciplines*

The evaluation of folklore as a discipline depends on the quality of our scholarship, not our name. There is no need to use *folklore* as a scapegoat and assume that by doing so we shall achieve the prosperity that has eluded us so far. Realistically, the present state of higher education in the United States does not hold any promise for growth, whatever strategy we shall follow. The creative operations of professional folklorists in regional or ethnic communities do not contribute to the academic strengthening of folklore. Leaving the academy may be a personal choice for individual professional folklorists, but when the discipline as a community heads for the exit gates, it cannot expect to make any further headway within the learning environment from which it defects.

Obviously, it would be an understatement to suggest that there is room for improvement in the position of folklore in the academy. Even outside the structure of disciplinary-bound departments, in the broader domain of intellectual dialogue we all would have liked folklore to fare better. If citations represent an index for the position of a field in the hierarchy of disciplines, even when size is factored into the calculation, folklore hardly has a respectable notch.<sup>13</sup> Our record of recognition is spotty. For any evidence of notice it is possible to mount ten indicating neglect. The journal of biblical studies, *Semeia*, founded in 1974, is the only nonfolklore journal, to the best of my knowledge, that cites folklore specifically as a field upon which its editors want to draw. In their advertisement they announce,

*Semeia* is an experimental journal devoted to the exploration of new and emergent areas and methods in biblical criticism. Studies employing the methods, models, and findings of linguistics,

folklore studies, contemporary literary criticism, structuralism, social anthropology, and other such disciplines and approaches, are invited. [*Semeia* 1974:2; see Wilder 1974:3]

Some current anthropologists point out that “thanks to careful work of the Opies and numerous folklorists, we have collections of the verbal art of children—their jump rope and ‘counting out’ rhymes, hand-clap songs, jokes, riddles and chants—and their games” (Goodwin 1997:4). Similarly, Susan Seizer acknowledges the leadership of folklore in some particular areas of social analysis as she notes that “in the past two decades—anthropologists have joined linguists and folklorists in significantly extending the study of speech acts and their contexts under the rubric of verbal performance” (Seizer 1997:62).

Others are not so generous. In her 1978 theoretical book, *On the Margins of Discourse: The Relation of Literature to Language*, Barbara Herrnstein Smith discusses proverbs extensively. By that time, folklorists had made some major strides in the rhetorical, literary, functional, and structural analyses of proverbs. Her own theoretical insights parallel and complement folkloristic formulations, yet her only references in folklore studies are to Archer Taylor’s classic *The Proverb* (1931) and Ruth Finnegan’s *Oral Literature in Africa* (1970). In the decade during which performance theory in folklore was brewing, she comments in a note,

Of all the relations a speaker may have to someone else’s words, perhaps the most interesting is in his *performing* of them, as when an actor recites the lines of a play or when we read a poem, either aloud or to ourselves. Performing is quite distinct from either quoting, depicting, or referring to an utterance—or, of course, saying it. The relation is, however, a complex matter in its own right. [1978:208]

During the 1970s there was already a substantial folkloristic literature on the subject, but Herrnstein Smith did not find it meaningful and left folklore on the margin of theory. So did Mary Louise Pratt. In retrospect, her book *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* (1977) reads like a period piece of the 1970s. It deals with literary texts but skirts the boundaries of face-to-face communication. She draws upon significant linguistic studies on narrative, but finds no use for any of the folkloristic research and theoretical formulation of that decade.

Fortunately, it is possible to notice the winds of change, and the term *folklore* does not necessarily obscure important scholarship and its appreciation. We can obviously point to some of our own members like Susan Stewart (1991), who has joined the ranks of major literary theoreticians and incorporates folklore theory and subjects in her work as a matter of course. In addition, we can also identify literary scholars with no previous folklore connections who turn to folklore scholarship without hesitation, finding it relevant to their own concerns. Casual reading that has not been motivated by the anxiety of recognition has turned up essays by Nancy Armstrong (1992) and Harriet Goldberg (1984, 1993). A deliberate search may or may not yield more essays. The issue at hand is the indication that the substance of folklore and its scholarship is not impeded by any negative meaning the term *folklore* connotes in other contexts.

Among historians the attitude to folklore and the folk is more problematic. When they seek to use broad strokes to portray U.S. society in history, some select a point of view that obscures folklore, others uphold its importance, and still others skirt their way around it. For example, Michael Kammen, a 1973 Pulitzer Prize historian, constructs the U.S. search for cultural identity in terms of competing categories: national versus folk. Scholarship receives but a dismissing note in his description:

Obviously, some interest in folklore and folk culture could be found in the United States prior to the interwar years. It emerged as an academic enthusiasm late in the 1880s, when not one but two professional associations were formed. Scholarly essays soon began to appear, journals were published, and even some state-based organizations such as the Virginia Folk-Lore Society founded in 1913. [Kammen 1991:426]

He continues his description of the interest in folklore in the United States during the interwar years on the basis of publications in popular magazines and on the prestige government personalities accord the presentation of folklore. The interest of wealthy folk art collectors receives more attention than the interest of any scholars who researched folklore in that era and whose work is presented in a patchy and unsystematic way in the service of the historical picture Kammen wishes to present (1991:426–443).

*The American Historical Review* forum that appeared in 1992 represents a most serious approach to the issue of folklore in industrial society. Centered around Lawrence Levine (1992), three other historians—Robin Kelley (1992), Natalie Zemon Davis (1992), and T. J. Jackson Lears (1992)—address the issues of conceptualizing “folk” and “folklore” in relation to mass media communication. Their discussion shifts from a theoretical to an empirical examination of the issues, drawing upon interdisciplinary scholarship that includes folklore studies, without the slightest hesitation about the intellectual value of either term as an effective means for the conceptualization of ideas. If “folk” represents a marginal group in the lecture of one historian, another retorts that the conception of margin itself is a problematic issue. In their entire discussion there is no trace of Jane Beck’s concern that the marginality of the *folk* is contagious and affects folklore (1997:123).<sup>14</sup>

Another historian finds *folklore* inadequate for his own purposes and opts for William Graham Sumner’s *folkways* instead. Seeking to construct the historical changes in U.S. culture, David Hackett Fischer (1989:7–11) finds *folklore* an inadequate concept. Curiously, in his reasoning he draws upon hesitations and doubts that are apparent in folklore scholarship. He points out that James Deetz, Henry Glassie, and Dell Upton prefer the use of the term *vernacular* rather than *folk* in reference to architecture (Fischer 1989:8); subsequently, he selects to modify the term *folkways*, ridding it of any biological connotations that Sumner (1906) imputed to it originally, and proceeds to use the term in a way that has a close semantic affinity with the current use of *folklore*.

Such terminological nuancing is part of any intellectual discourse. Fine-tuning of terms is necessary for the presentation of ideas. In the process some uphold and others modify the term *folklore*. No doubt some writers confound the term, while others see through its layered meaning. In the final analysis we cannot be responsible for how others view us, only for what we do. Our actions give meaning to our name. There are no unlucky stars or unlucky names for disciplines.

The moments of self-evaluation that punctuate the history of our discipline could serve as constructive, critical self-examination; those may become our theoretical and methodological turning points. But in these moments let us not lose sight of the fundamentals of folklore and the intellectual traditions from which we draw and to which we attempt to contribute. Contrary to its image in popular and public culture, folklore is not a research of the eleventh hour. The urge to preserve and display the past fuels community action, not the activities of the folklorist who records in order to analyze and interpret. By the traditionalization of ideas, beliefs, and artistic forms and by the transformation of behavior into customs, communities preserve, commemorate, and even construct their past. In the course of research speakers do not identify their songs, proverbs, tales, dresses, and buildings as traditional unless they are so conceived by their communities. Consequently the communal process of traditionalization and the scholarly search for tradition converge, giving the false impression that folklore itself is a discipline that perches on the eleventh hour-line. But this is a case of blurred vision. Like other social and humanistic disciplines, folklore contemplates what has already been done and said, and, in most cases, has but a weak predictive capability. Casting our observations into models, hypotheses and scenarios may be heuristically valuable but are not essential. In that respect folklore joins a host of other disciplines that are descriptive and interpretive rather than prescriptive or predictive.<sup>15</sup> The map of these disciplines may be changing, and if so, the interest of historians, linguists, anthropologists, and literary theoreticians in our subject matter only strengthens the position of folklore. Folklorists, who know their own subject more profoundly than students of other disciplines, could formulate research questions that reflect their knowledge and at the same time relate their interest to broader intellectual concerns. If the genres of scholarship are somewhat blurred now, if their boundaries are crossed, and if their territories are newly appropriated, it does not mean that they all turn into a muddled thought, lacking the discipline, language, and history that their names signify.

To end I would like to shift from folkloristics to folklore and conclude with a parable from the Hasidic tradition:

Rabbi Zusya said, "In the coming world, they will not ask me: 'Why were you not Moses?' They will ask me: 'Why were you not Zusya?' " [Buber 1947:251]<sup>16</sup>

### Notes

A previous version of this article, entitled "How to Blame Others for Sinking Deeper in a Hole We have Dug for Ourselves," was presented at the 1996 annual meeting of the AFS in Pittsburgh, October 1996. I would like to thank Ilana Harlow for inviting me to participate in the panel she organized

in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the coinage of *folklore* and for the meticulous editing of this article, to Jane Beck and Regina Bendix for sharing with me pre-publication versions of their articles, being fully aware that I am critical of their positions, and to Robert St. George for bibliographical help.

<sup>1</sup>Outside the field of folklore, the historian Marc Bloch (1931) advocated the use of folklore in the study of history. Methodologically, he demonstrated the significance of folklore, among other factors, in his study of French rural history.

<sup>2</sup>Following the war period, The Folk-Lore Society in England was headed by a series of nonacademic presidents (Dorson 1961:17–19). Later Dorson commented, “Folklore, the subject created and once highly honored in England, now languishes, not for the lack of interest or talents, but for want of academic recognition” (Dorson 1965:242).

<sup>3</sup>Herskovits quotes van Gennep in French; the translation is mine.

<sup>4</sup>The antiquarian perspective, however, was central to affluent collectors whose activities later on became a subject of scholarly research into the history of U.S. folk art collections and exhibitions; see Rumford 1980 and Vlach 1985. I would like to thank Robert St. George for these references and clarification of some of the issues related to this movement of interest in U.S. folk art.

<sup>5</sup>Bakhtin wrote his book on Rabelais as a doctoral dissertation that he submitted to the Gorky Institute (Clark and Holquist 1984:263).

<sup>6</sup>References to Vico (1984[1948]) are made by citing the paragraph number.

<sup>7</sup>See the note entitled “AFS Admitted to Constituency in American Council of Learned Societies,” *Journal of American Folklore* 58:158.

<sup>8</sup>Dorson (1972a:107) cites the figure of 2,600 as the number of institutions of higher learning. Any growth or decline that occurred since then does not change the situation significantly.

<sup>9</sup>The declining state of higher education in the United States has become in itself a subject of research, analysis, criticism, and self-reflection. Books on this theme are published and republished as the crisis continues. In 1972 Dorson referred to Nisbet (1971); one of the later volumes on the state of the university is Readings 1996.

<sup>10</sup>The members of the committee were Richard Bauman (chairman), Robert A. Byington, Henry Glassie, Rayna Green, and Harry Oster. The committee report and the proposal for the Center appear in Stekert 1972:33, 38–39.

<sup>11</sup>I could not examine the eighth edition of the dictionary.

<sup>12</sup>*Merriam Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature* does not credit individual articles and it is hence impossible for me to determine whether the entry *folklore* was written by trained folklorists or an editorial staff member.

<sup>13</sup>Uriel G. Foa suggested that a measure for the prestige of academic fields could be made by analyzing “the frequency with which scientists in one discipline quote papers from other disciplines, and relate these findings to the relative status of the disciplines involved” (Thayer 1967:149). See also my comments on this issue and the general problem of this essay in Ben-Amos 1973:117–119.

<sup>14</sup>The relativity of the construction of margins and center is apparent in the essays in *The American Historical Review*.

<sup>15</sup>There is a voluminous literature on the scientific nature of the social sciences and the humanities. A starting point for reading on this subject is Nagel 1961:447–606.

<sup>16</sup>In the Hebrew version of his book (1957:481), Martin Buber notes that he heard this version from Yehudah Yaari. Zusya of Annopol (d. 1800) was a Hasidic preacher, whose sermons and sayings were edited in the book *Menorat Zahav* (1902) (see Rabinowicz 1996:563–564).

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